8th Plan, it is difficult to declare any new National Highway at present.

Protection of National Highways from Floods/Cyclones

2533. SHRI S. AUSTIN: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total length of National Highways covering Tamil Nadu;

(b) what are the stretches of National Highways in the State which have been identified as prone to damage due to floods and cyclone; and

(c) what are the steps taken to protect the same from damage by natural calamities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) 1896 km.

(b) Stretches of N. H. Nos. 4, 5, 7, 45, 47 and 49 close to the coast are prone to flood/cyclone damages.

(c) Protection works are taken up depending upon the requirements and availability of funds.

Decline in Indian Shipping lines

2534. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the country's 77 per cent international trade is carried by ocean freighter;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the share of Indian Shipping lines in carrying general cargo has declined from 24 per cent to 1 per cent during the last decade;

(c) whether Government have gone into the reasons of this decline and if so, what are the details thereof; and

(d) what measures are being taken to increase the shipping fleet of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) About 95 per cent of India's total overseas trade in terms of volume is carried by sea.

(b) No, Sir. The percentage share of Indian Shipping lines carrying general cargo has declined from 24 per cent in 1984-85 to 14.4 per cent in 1992-93.

(c) Inadequate tonnage and absence of fully cellular container vessels in the Indian fleet, are the main reasons for decline in the share of Indian Shipping line.

(d) The Government have taken the following measures for augmenting the Indian fleet to increase the overseas trade of India and greater participation in the movement of seaborne cargo:—

1. Automatic approval is now given for:

(i) Acquisition of all catergories of ships except crude tankers and OSVs, by Private Shipowning Companies.

(ii) Sale of ships for further trading|scrapping to a compeny within India or abroad.

(iii) Acquisition of ship from an Indian Shipyard; and

(iv) Acquisition for replacement tonnage.

2. Shipping Companies have been allowed to retain sale proceeds of their ships abroad and utilise them for fresh acquisition.

3. Shipping companies are allowed to acquire vessels through bare boat charter-cum-demise method.

4. Quarterly Block Allocation Scheme for repair of ships has been dispensed with entirely and Reserve Bank of India now releases foreign exchange for ship repair/dry docking and spares for imported capital goods without any value limit.

5. Freight charges on account of movement of fertilizer and petroleum products are now allowed to be paid in convertible currency on par with other commodities.

6. Certain Sections of Merchant Shipping Act were considered by foreign lenders as impediments to the enforcement of the rights of lenders in case of loan defaults and consequent requirement of foreclosure of the mortgage. These sections have now been amended, to facilitate Inditn Shipping Companies to raise external commercial borrowing for ship acquisition from abroad.

7. Shipping Corporation of India has acquired three cellular container vessels in December, 1993 and January, 1994.

Movement of Goverment and Public Sector Cargoes

2535. SHRI S. MADHAVAN: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the share of foreign flag vessels in moving cargo for transchart which is responsible for moving Government and Public Sector cargoes, has been increasing;

(b) whether the Indian shipping companies were permitted for chartering out Indian flag vessels without obtaining permission from the Director General of Shipping; and

(c) if so, what steps are being taken to move the Government and Public Sector cargoes without facing difficulty in getting vessels?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) No, Sir. The share of foreign flag vessels in the carriage of Government and Public Sector cargoes through. Transchart during the last five calendar years has been as under:—

1989	41.46%
1990	33.58%
1991	38.54%
1992	45.24%
1993	41.17%

(b) Yes, Sir.

(b) In order to increase the Indian tonnage and share of Indian ships, a number of steps have been taken. These include automatic approval for (a) acquisition of ships from Indian shipyards, (b) replacement tonnage, (c) acpuisition of vessels by Ship Owning Companies except Crude tankers and OSVs, (d) sale of ships and retention of sale proceed to utilise for fresh acquisition, acquisition of vessels through bare-boat charter-cum demise ,amendment in the Merchant Shipping act to facilitate financing of ship acquisition etc.

संसद सदस्यों द्वारा जल भूतल परिवहन मंत्रालय को भेजे गये पत्रों का निपटारा

2536. **श्री मोहम्मद अफजल उर्फ मीम अफजल :** क्या **जल भूतल परिवहन** मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) संसद सदस्यों द्वारा उनके मंत्रालय को 1 अप्रैल, 1990 से 31 मार्च 1993 तक कितने पत्र लिखे गए और उनका वर्षवार ब्यौरा क्या है;

(ख) उनमें से कितने पत्रों की प्राप्ति स्वीकृति भेजी गयी;

(ग) कितने पत्रों के अंतिम उत्तर भेजे गए; और

(घ) भेजे गए इन अंतिम पत्रों में से कितने पत्रों के उत्तर नकारात्मक और कितने के सकारात्मक थे ?